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**Mayor Brandon Johnson, Musician Vic Mensa Headline
Metropolitan Peace Academy Community Violence Intervention Graduation**

CHICAGO, December 20, 2024 – Chicago Mayor **Brandon Johnson** and Chicago-born musician, actor and philanthropist **Vic Mensa** joined the Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI) and Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P) Thursday night as they celebrated the newest round of Chicago community violence intervention (CVI) graduates from the Metropolitan Peace Academy (MPA).

The MPA is the Metropolitan Peace Initiative’s premier multi-disciplinary training program designed to provide skill building and professional development to the individuals who support the field of community violence intervention (CVI). The Academy provides intensive and robust gun violence prevention training for street outreach workers, case managers, victim advocates, trauma recovery specialists and Chicago police officers.

“This class of graduates joins a growing workforce across Chicago serving as boots on the ground and working to build the safest communities in the country,” said **Vaughn Bryant**, MPI Executive Director and Vice President.

Mensa served as keynote speaker. Relaying a message of peace, he urged attendees and graduates alike to embrace love and hope, despite facing systemic and personal challenges.

“The work you all do really deals with freedom,” said Mensa. “The cycle of violence is so imprisoning, not just in the physical sense. I’ve realized I have to recontextualize myself as a peaceful person, and to believe in myself as a peaceful person.”

Mayor Brandon Johnson accepted the first-ever MPI Peacemaker Award for his efforts advocating on behalf of communities most affected by gun violence and spearheading violence prevention programming across Chicago.

“I’m grateful to be recognized for this commitment to fostering true, healthy communities,” said Mayor Johnson. “Of course, I cannot do this work alone. I accept this alongside the entire city of Chicago, including you all. You all in this room are activating a mission to ultimately build a better, stronger and safer future for posterity.”

To date, over 550 individuals have graduated from the MPA.

About MPI

Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI), a division of Metropolitan Family Services, convenes Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P), a coalition of 15 community-based organizations focused on reducing gun violence in 28 of Chicago’s highest-risk neighborhoods. For more information, visit www.MetropolitanPeaceInitiatives.org.

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